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(54) Title: **SYSTEM FOR CONDUCTING COMPUTERIZED NEGOTIATIONS**

(57) Abstract:

SYSTEM FOR CONDUCTING COMPUTERIZED NEGOTIATIONS

BACKGROUND OF THE INVENTION

The present invention relates to a system for conducting computerized negotiations that is provided over a network for negotiating a contract, license or dispute, including negotiations to settle litigation, arbitration, mediation or other dispute resolution mechanisms (herein referred to generally as "Claims").

The process of resolving a Claim between multiple parties often involves negotiations on a variety of subjects, including contract or settlement terms, discovery disputes, and other differences, and negotiations among attorneys and clients involving one or more Claims. As used herein, "Negotiations" can include any contract or dispute resolution discussions seeking to reach agreement regarding a Claim. Currently, Negotiations can occur in person, by traditional voice transmission, or by video conferencing/web conferencing. However, each of these current negotiation techniques has various limitations in its current form.

In-person Negotiations, for example, are expensive due to, among others, the cost of travel and the time expended. During in-person negotiations, the parties may not have ready access to document templates or forms or informational databases that may aid them in their negotiations. If the parties speak different languages, unless a translator is employed, which further adds to the cost, the parties cannot easily communicate with each other. If the parties are interest in pursuing a structured settlement, the parties cannot easily receive a structured settlement quote. Finally, unless a mediator or other neutral party is employed, which further adds to the cost, the parties cannot easily determine whether the outer limits of their settlement valuations will settle a Claim. If an actual offer or demand at the outer limits is made and not accepted, the party putting forth the position may have set a negotiating floor or ceiling. These and other factors discourage parties from exploring fully the potential for negotiating a Claim during in-person Negotiations.

Traditional voice transmission Negotiations also have limitations, including the inability to quickly verify the outer limits of the various parties' settlement valuations, the inability to access document templates, forms, and informational databases, the inability to conduct the Negotiations in multiple languages, the inability to receive a structured settlement quote as described above. In addition, parties cannot share documents and

exhibits, such as contract terms and damage calculations. While some documents can be exchanged in advance, Negotiations often involve deciding whether and when to present various types of exhibits or documents depending on the status of the Negotiations. Exchanges of documents in advance of Negotiations do not meet this need. Also, parties
5 often dispute what was agreed upon during traditional voice transmission Negotiations. Finally, the ability to have private discussions, such as between an attorney and client in different locations is difficult and awkward.

Video conference/web conference Negotiations also have various limitations, including the inability to quickly verify the outer limits of the various parties' settlement
10 valuations, the inability to access document templates, forms, and informational databases, the inability to conduct the Negotiations in multiple languages, the inability to receive a structured settlement quote as described above. Video conferencing/web conferencing can allow for limited exchange of documents or exhibits. If video conference/web conference Negotiations are recorded, there is a record of what was
15 agreed upon. However, many Negotiations are intended to include a substantial amount of "off the record" discussion, and recording a session may defeat this purpose. In addition, video conference/web conference Negotiations typically do not allow private discussions between parties that are not in the same location. Such Negotiations also do not address the inability of parties to explore without risk the outer limits of their
20 settlement valuations. Finally, video conferencing equipment is not widely available and is relatively expensive.

BRIEF SUMMARY OF THE INVENTION

The current invention avoids the problems that are inherent in available negotiation techniques. This invention allows multiple users, including a mediator or
25 other neutral party and a court reporter (the "Parties"), to log onto a computerized negotiation system via a network, no matter where the Parties are located, and Negotiate their Claim on-line. This allows Parties in various locations to participate in the Negotiations while avoiding the costs of travel to get the Parties to a single location. It allows the Parties to communicate via voice, video, or text communications, or any
30 combination, with all of the Parties logged onto the system, to exchange documents over the network, and allows the users to edit documents over the network in real time. It allows the users and the mediator to communicate with only a specified individual or

specified group via text or voice communications or to exchange documents with only a specified individual or specified group. It provides the users with editable document templates and forms to give the parties a starting point for their Negotiations and allows the users to import their own documents which it can then save as a template and allow
5 public or private access. It allows the users to secure documents when complete so that they cannot be changed, allows the users to post documents where the documents can be accessed by any of the users at a later date, and allows documents to be emailed directly from the system without the need to download the document to a users computer. It allows documents to be digitally signed so that they are legally binding. It provides the
10 Parties access to informational databases that may be relevant to the Negotiations. It provides translation of text, communications and documents between multiple languages. It provides a way for the users to obtain structured settlement quotes from a broker. Finally, it allows the users to determine whether the outer limits of their settlement valuations will settle the case by giving them the option of entering confidential offers
15 and demands, and informing the parties if a settlement can be reached based on those confidential offers and demands.

In one embodiment of the system of the current invention, the system contains way for users to access a structured computer program via a network. It has a way for the users to communicate via text, audio, or video communications over the network and a
20 way for the users to privately communicate with a specified user over the network. Finally, it has a way for the users to exchange documents over the network and to edit documents simultaneously in real time.

In another embodiment of the system of the current invention, a user has access to a structured computer program through a network. The user has the ability to
25 communicate with other users via text, audio, or video communications and can privately communicate with a specified user or group of users over the network. The user has the ability to share documents with other users over the network and the ability to edit document in real time over the network. Finally, the user has access to various negotiation services through the structured computer program.

30 In another embodiment of the system of the current invention, the system provides assess to users to a structured computer program via a network. It provides communications between the users via text, audio, or video communications and provides private communications with specified users or specified groups of users over the

network. It provides for the exchange of documents between users over the network and provides a way for the users to edit documents simultaneously in real time. Finally, it provides access to various negotiation services through the structured computer program.

BRIEF DESCRIPTION OF THE SEVERAL VIEWS OF THE DRAWING

5 FIG. 1 sets forth a diagram of the structure of the preferred embodiment of the basic system for conducting computerized negotiations.

FIG. 2 sets forth a diagram of the structure of the preferred embodiment of the system for conducting computerized negotiations with optional negotiation services.

DETAILED DESCRIPTION OF THE INVENTION

10 The embodiment of the invention shown in the attached drawings provides a system for conducting computerized negotiations that allows multiple parties, no matter where they are located, to log onto a centralized computer and negotiate a Claim on-line. It will be understood that the program is run on a computer capable of communication with multiple parties via a network, as will be more readily understood from a study of
15 the diagrams.

In Figure 1 there is illustrated the preferred embodiment of the structure of the basic system for conducting computerized negotiations. In the preferred embodiment of the system of the current invention, users 100, 120 access a structured computer program 130 through the Internet (not shown). The users 100, 120 can access the structured
20 computer program 130 using a computer, a handheld computing device, or any means that allows an individual access to the Internet and allows communications via text, audio, or video communications. In addition, the structured computer program 130 can be accessed through a local area network, a wide area network, or any other system that allows access to individuals from remote locations.

25 The structured computer program 130 has access to and provides the users 100, 120 with communications services 140, private communications services 150, documents sharing services 160, and document editing/drafting services 170, and optional negotiation services 180.

The communications services 140 allow the users 100, 120 to communicate with
30 one another over the Internet. The users 100, 120 are given the option of communicating via text, audio, or video communications, or any combination thereof.

The private communications services 150 allow an individual user to communicate with another specified individual user or specified group of users only (a "Sidebar"). For example, if a plaintiff in a lawsuit and its attorney are accessing the system from different locations and are negotiating with a defendant and its attorney, the plaintiff can have a Sidebar with its attorney outside the hearing of the defendant or the defendant's attorney. This communication can be through text messaging, voice transmission, or any other means of communication where a party can limit the communication to a specified individual or specified group. When a user conducts a Sidebar via text communications, the users not involved in the Sidebar are not notified that the Sidebar is occurring. Conversely, when an user conducts a Sidebar via voice communications, the users not involved in the Sidebar are notified that the Sidebar is occurring, but do not participate in the Sidebar. By way of example, during Negotiations a plaintiff and its attorneys may exchange text messages. When a text message is sent by the plaintiff to its attorney, the attorney receives the message without the knowledge of the defendant or its attorney. However, when the users are involved in the Negotiations, a list of the users that are on-line and participating shows up on each users' screen. When a user conducts a Sidebar via voice communications, the screen shows that a Sidebar is occurring between those users.

The document sharing services 160 allow the users 100, 120 to take documents that are in their possession and place them on the system to share them in real time with the other users. These documents may be contracts, exhibits, discovery materials, damage requests, damage calculations, agreement provisions, or any other document that a user wants to share with the other users. Once on the system, these documents can be accessed by all of the users 100, 120.

The document editing/drafting services 170 allow the users 100, 120 to draft or edit documents simultaneously in real time. For example, if the users 100, 120 are attempting to draft a settlement agreement, the settlement agreement can be posted on the system. As the users 100, 120 discuss the various provisions of the settlement agreement, each individual user can make changes to the settlement agreement as the Negotiations continue. When the Negotiations are complete, the users 100, 120 will then have a copy of exactly what was agreed to in the Negotiations with input from all of the users 100, 120.

The optional negotiation services 180 provide the users 100, 120 with additional negotiation services that may be helpful in conducting their Negotiations, but are not necessarily required as part of the Negotiations. In Figure 2 there is illustrated the preferred embodiment of the structure of the system for conducting computerized negotiations with the optional negotiation services. In the preferred embodiment, the optional negotiation services 180 that can be accessed by the structured computer program 130 and provided to the users 100, 120 consist of document templates/forms 190, private forms 200, secure documents 210, post documents 220, send documents 230, limited document sharing 240, digital signature 250, informational databases 260, translation 270, claim settlement 280, structured settlement quotes 290, mediator participation, and court reporter participation. It is understood that the optional negotiation services 180 listed herein have been presented as those services provided in the preferred embodiment of the invention. All of the optional services listed, or any combination of optional services, can be provided as are suited to the particular use contemplated.

In document templates/forms 190, the structured computer program 130 has access to a template/form database 320. The users 100, 120 can then access the template/form database 320 through the structured computer program 130 and will have access to templates and forms that may be used during Negotiations. In an alternate embodiment of the invention, different templates and forms can be made available to the users 100, 120 depending on the subject matter of the Negotiations. Once a template or form is chosen, the users 100, 120 will be able to see and comment upon the text of the template or form. The template or form can then be edited as described in document editing/drafting service 170 above as the Negotiations progress.

In private forms 200, the structured computer program 130 has access to a private user form database 330 and a public user form database 340. If a user were to post a template or form on the system that they wanted to leave on the system for anyone to use in the future, the structured computer program 130 would save the form in the public user form database 340. If the user wanted the form to only be available to other specified users, the user would indicate that the form is private and the structured computer program 130 would save the form in the private user form database 330. In order to access a form in the private user form database 330, a user would have to supply a qualified user name and password.

In secure documents 210, the structured computer program 130 can secure or protect documents on request of one of the users. When used, the structured computer program 130 will protect a document so that no changes can be made to the document until the document is unsecured by the user that secured it. This allows the users 100, 5 120 to be confident that a document that is left on the system is not altered from the last time the documents was accessed.

In post documents 220, the structured computer program 130 has access to a memory means 500, such as a computer hard drive or RAM, where it can save, or "post," documents received from the users 100, 120. These documents can then be accessed by 10 the users 100, 120 at a later date or time.

In send documents 230, the structured computer program 130 has access to an email means 510 where it can transmit documents that reside in the memory means 500 or that are being worked on by the users 100, 120 on the system. In send documents 230, the users 100, 120 are able to enter the email addresses of the parties that they want to 15 received a specified document and transmit the document directly from the system to the other parties without having to save a copy of the document to their hard drive. For example, at the conclusion of Negotiations, a completed template can be emailed to all of the users 100, 120 so that everyone has an accurate record of the final document.

In limited document sharing 240 the structured computer program 130 allows the 20 users 100, 120 to take documents that are in their possession, place them on the system, and share them in real time with a limited number of additional users. For example, during the course of a Negotiation, a plaintiff would be able to share a document with its attorney without giving a defendant or its attorney access to the document.

In digital signature 250 the structured computer program 130 allows the users 100, 25 120 to sign documents via a digital signature. This allows the users 100, 120 to verify that the document is authentic and has not been changed.

In informational databases 260, the structured computer program 130 has access to and can provide the users 100, 120 access to various informational databases that may be helpful in their Negotiations. For example, the users 100, 120 may be able to access 30 local procedural and discovery rules, local environmental cleanup regulations, or other informational databases relevant to their area of Negotiations. These informational databases 260 can be an integral part of the structured computer program 130 or the

structured computer program 130 can provide access to outside databases provided by third parties.

In translation 270, each user may choose the language for their Negotiations. Once a user has chosen a language, any text, communications or documents that the structured computer program 130 sends to the user will be translated into the chosen language. For example, if a first user chooses English as its negotiation language and a second user chooses Italian, the text, communications, or documents sent by the structured computer program 130 to the first user would be in English and the text, communications, or documents sent by the structured computer program 130 to the second user would be in Italian. Similarly, if the first user enters a text message in English and sends it to the second user, the structured computer program 130 will translate the text message from English to Italian and send it to the second user in Italian. If the first user posts a document in a text readable form in English, the structured computer program 130 will translate the document from English to Italian and the second user can view the document in Italian.

In claim settlement 280, the structured computer program 130 has access to a computerized dispute resolution system 350 which allows the users 100, 120 to engage in a real time exchange of confidential offers and demands to be measured against a settlement parameter to determine either a compromise settlement point or to agree upon offer and demand figures which will be disclosed simultaneously as agreed upon negotiating parameters. In the preferred embodiment, the computerized dispute resolution system 350 is the Method for Computerized Accelerated Resolution of Disputes described in PCT Application Serial No. PCT/US01/01816 filed on January 19, 2001, by inventor Donald V. Jernberg, which is incorporated herein by reference.

In structured settlement quotes 290 the structured computer program 130 has access to a qualified structured settlement broker 360. When the users 100, 120 request a structured settlement quote and submit the required information, the structured computer program 130 send the information to the qualified structured settlement broker 360. The structured computer program 130 then receives a structured settlement quote from the qualified structured settlement broker 360 and communicates the structured settlement quote to the users 100, 120. The structured computer program 130 can either post the structured settlement quote received from the qualified structured settlement broker 360

on the system where it can be accessed by the users 100, 120 or can send the structured settlement quote to the users 100, 120 via the email means 510.

5 In mediator participation the users 100, 120 can request that a mediator 400 participate in the Negotiation. The request for a mediator 400 can be made when the users 100, 120 initiate the system or at any time during the Negotiation. When a mediator 400 participates, the system provides access to the structured computer program 130 to the mediator 400 through the Internet and also provides the mediator 400 with communications services 140, private communications services 150; and document sharing services 160, just as provided to the users 100, 120.

10 In court reporter participation the users 100, 120 can request that a court reporter 410 participate in the Negotiation. The request for a court reporter 410 can be made when the users 100, 120 initiate the system or at any time during the Negotiation. When a court reporter 410 participates, the system provides access to the structured computer program 130 to the court reporter 410 through the Internet and also provides the court
15 reporter 410 with communications services 140 and document sharing services 160, just as provided to the users 100, 120. The structured computer program 130 also has access to a transcript service 370. The transcript service 370 allows the structured computer program 130 to display the transcript of the Negotiation to the users 100, 120 as it is being entered by the court reporter 410. At the conclusion of the Negotiation, the
20 structured computer program 130 saves the transcript in the memory means 500. The transcript can then be accessed by the users 100, 120 at any time or the structured computer program 130 can be sent to the users 100, 120 via the email means 510.

The foregoing description of a preferred embodiment of the invention has been presented for purposes of illustration and description, and is not intended to be exhaustive
25 or to limit the invention to the precise form disclosed. The description was selected to best explain the principles of the invention and their practical application to enable other skills in the art to best utilize the invention in various embodiments and various modifications as are suited to the particular use contemplated. It is intended that the scope of the invention not be limited by the specification, but be defined by the claims set
30 forth below.

CLAIMS

I claim:

1. A system for conducting computerized negotiations, comprising:
 - a) a means for accessing a structured computer program by a plurality of users via a network;
 - b) a means for allowing the plurality of users to communicate via text, audio,
5 or video communications over the network;
 - c) a means for allowing private communications between the plurality of users over the network;
 - d) a means for exchanging a document between the plurality of users over the network;
 - 10 e) a means for simultaneously editing a document by the plurality of users in real time.
2. A system for conducting computerized negotiations, as recited in claim 1, further comprising:
 - a) a means for the structured computer program to access a database of document templates and forms.
3. A system for conducting computerized negotiations, as recited in claim 1, further comprising:
 - a) a means for the structured computer program to receive a user document from a user;
 - 5 b) a means for the structured computer program to covert the user document into a user template and to save the user template into a user template database;
 - c) a means for the user to mark the user template as public or private;
 - d) a means for the structured computer program to provide secure access to user templates marked private; and
 - 10 e) a means for the structured computer program to provide access to user templates marked public.

4. A system for conducting computerized negotiations, as recited in claim 1, further comprising:

a) a means for the structured computer program to secure documents so that they cannot be edited.

5. A system for conducting computerized negotiations, as recited in claim 1, further comprising:

a) a means for the structured computer program to save a document in a memory means; and

5 b) a means for the plurality of users to access the document saved in the memory means over the network.

6. A system for conducting computerized negotiations, as recited in claim 1, further comprising:

a) a means for the structured computer program to send a document to the plurality of users over the network.

7. A system for conducting computerized negotiations, as recited in claim 1, further comprising:

a) a means for a user to exchange a document with a specified user or a specified group of users over the network.

8. A system for conducting computerized negotiations, as recited in claim 1, further comprising:

a) a means for the plurality of users to digitally sign documents.

9. A system for conducting computerized negotiations, as recited in claim 1, further comprising:

a) a means for the structured computer program to access a plurality of informational databases.

10. A system for conducting computerized negotiations, as recited in claim 1, further comprising:

a) a means for the structured computer program to translate text, communications, and documents between multiple languages.

11. A system for conducting computerized negotiation, as recited in claim 1, further comprising:

a) a means for the structured computer program to determine if the plurality of users are within a settlement range.

12. A system for conducting computerized negotiations, as recited in claim 1, further comprising:

a) a means for the structured computer program to request and receive a structured settlement quote from a broker; and

5 b) a means for the structured computer program to communicate the structured settlement quote to the plurality of users.

13. A system for conducting computerized negotiations, as recited in claim 1, further comprising:

a) a means for accessing a structured computer program by a mediator via the network;

5 b) a means for allowing the mediator to communicate via text, audio, or video communications over the network;

c) a means for allowing private communications between the mediator and a specified user or a specified group of users over the network; and

d) a means for exchanging a document between the mediator and the plurality
10 of users over the network.

14. A system for conducting computerized negotiations, as recited in claim 1, further comprising:

a) a means for accessing a structured computer program by a court reporter via the network;

5 b) a means for allowing the court reporter to communicate via text, audio, or video communications over the network;

c) a means for exchanging a document between the court reporter and the plurality of users over the network;

d) a means for the structured computer program to display a transcript to the
10 plurality of users as it is being entered by the court reporter;

- e) a means for the structured computer program to save the transcript to a memory means;
 - f) a means for the structured computer program to email the transcript to the plurality of users; and
 - 15 g) a means for the plurality of users to access the transcript from the memory means.
15. A system for conducting computerized negotiations, comprising:
- a) a means for accessing a structured computer program by a plurality of users, a mediator, and a court reporter via the Internet;
 - b) a means for allowing the plurality of users, the mediator, and the court
5 reporter to communicate via text, audio, or video communications over the Internet;
 - c) a means for allowing private communications between the plurality of users and with the mediator over the Internet;
 - d) a means for exchanging a document between the plurality of users, the mediator, and the court reporter over the Internet;
 - 10 e) a means for editing a document by the plurality of users in real time;
 - f) a means for the structured computer program to access a database of document templates and forms;
 - g) a means for the structured computer program to receive a user document, covert the user document into a user template, and save the user template into a user
15 template database;
 - h) a means for the plurality of users to mark the user template as public or private;
 - i) a means for the structured computer program to provide secure access to user templates marked private and to provide unrestricted access to user templates marked
20 public;
 - j) a means for the structured computer program to secure documents so that they cannot be edited;
 - k) a means for the structured computer program to save documents in a memory means;
 - 25 l) a means for the plurality of users to access documents saved in the memory means over the network;

- m) a means for the structured computer program to send documents to the plurality of users over the Internet;
 - n) a means for the plurality of users to exchange documents with a specified
30 user or a specified group of users over the Internet;
 - o) a means for the plurality of users to digitally sign documents;
 - p) a means for the structured computer program to access a plurality of informational databases;
 - q) a means for the structured computer program to translate text,
35 communications, and documents between multiple languages;
 - r) a means for the structured computer program to determine if the plurality of users is within a settlement range;
 - s) a means for the structured computer program to request and receive a structured settlement quote from a broker and to communicate the structured settlement
40 quote to the plurality of users;
 - t) a means for the structured computer program to display a transcript to the plurality of users as it is being entered by the court reporter, to save the transcript to a memory means, and to email the transcript to the plurality of users; and
 - u) a means for the plurality of users to access the transcript from the memory
45 means.
16. A system for conducting computerized negotiations, comprising:
- a) having access to a structured computer program via a network;
 - b) having the ability to communicate with a plurality of users via text, audio, or video communications over the network;
 - 5 c) having the ability to privately communicate with a specified user or group of users over the network;
 - d) having the ability to share documents with the plurality of users over the network;
 - e) having the ability to edit documents in real time over the network; and
 - 10 f) having access to a plurality of negotiation services through the structured computer program over the network.

17. A system for conducting computerized negotiations, as recited in claim 16, wherein one of the plurality of negotiation services comprises:

a) having access to a database of document templates and forms through the structured computer program over the network.

18. A system for conducting computerized negotiations, as recited in claim 16, wherein one of the plurality of negotiation services comprises:

a) having the ability to mark a user document as public or private and submit the user document through the structured computer program; and

5 b) having the ability to access the user document over the network.

19. A system for conducting computerized negotiations, as recited in claim 16, wherein one of the plurality of negotiation services comprises:

a) having the ability to secure a document so that the document cannot be changed.

20. A system for conducting computerized negotiations, as recited in claim 16, wherein one of the plurality of negotiation services comprises:

a) having the ability to save a document on the system; and

b) having the ability to access the document from the system.

21. A system for conducting computerized negotiations, as recited in claim 16, wherein one of the plurality of negotiation services comprises:

a) having the ability to send a document to a plurality of users through the structured computer program over the network.

22. A system for conducting computerized negotiations, as recited in claim 16, wherein one of the plurality of negotiation services comprises:

a) having the ability to share a document with a specified user or specified group of users over the network.

23. A system for conducting computerized negotiations, as recited in claim 16, wherein one of the plurality of negotiation services comprises:

a) having the ability to digitally signing documents.

24. A system for conducting computerized negotiations, as recited in claim 16, wherein one of the plurality of negotiation services comprises:

a) having access to a plurality of informational databases through the structured computer program over the network.

25. A system for conducting computerized negotiations, as recited in claim 16, wherein one of the plurality of negotiation services comprises:

a) having the ability to receive text, communications, and documents from the structured computer program translated into multiple languages.

26. A system for conducting computerized negotiations, as recited in claim 16, wherein one of the plurality of negotiation services comprises:

a) having the ability to determine if the user and the other users are within a settlement parameter.

27. A system for conducting computerized negotiations, as recited in claim 16, wherein one of the plurality of negotiation services comprises:

a) having the ability to request a structured settlement quote through the structured computer program; and

5 b) having the ability to received a structured settlement quote from the structured computer program over the network.

28. A system for conducting computerized negotiations, as recited in claim 16, wherein one of the plurality of negotiation services comprises:

a) having the ability to communicate with a mediator via text, audio, or video communications over the network;

5 b) having the ability to privately communicate with the mediator over the network; and

c) having the ability to share documents with the mediator over the network.

29. A system for conducting computerized negotiations, as recited in claim 16, wherein one of the plurality of negotiation services comprises:

a) having the ability to communicate with a court reporter via text, audio, or video communications over the network;

- 5 b) having the ability to exchange documents with the court reporter over the network;
- c) having the ability to receive a transcript as it is being entered by the court reporter;
- d) having the ability to receive a copy of the transcript from the structured
- 10 computer program; and
- e) having access to the transcript through the structured computer program over the network.
30. A system for conducting computerized negotiations, comprising:
- a) having access to a structured computer program via the Internet;
- b) having the ability to communicate with a plurality of users, a mediator, and a court reporter via text, audio, or video communications over the Internet;
- 5 c) having the ability to privately communicate with a specified user or group of users over the Internet;
- d) having the ability to exchange documents with the plurality of users, the mediator, or the court reporter over the Internet;
- e) having the ability to edit documents in real time over the Internet;
- 10 f) having access to a database of document templates and forms through the structured computer program over the Internet;
- g) having the ability to mark a user document as public or private, submit the user document through the structured computer program, and access the user document over the Internet;
- 15 h) having the ability to secure a document so that the document cannot be changed;
- i) having the ability to save a document on the system and to access the document from the system;
- j) having the ability to email a document to a plurality of users through the
- 20 structured computer program over the Internet;
- k) having the ability to share a document with a specified user or specified group of users over the Internet;
- l) having the ability to digitally signing documents;

- 25 m) having access to a plurality of informational databases through the structured computer program over the Internet;
- n) having the ability to receive text, communications, and documents from the structured computer program translated into multiple languages;
- o) having the ability to determine if the user and the other users are within a settlement parameter;
- 30 p) having the ability to request a structured settlement quote through the structured computer program and received a structured settlement quote from the structured computer program over the Internet;
- q) having the ability to receive a transcript as it is being entered by the court reporter;
- 35 r) having the ability to receive an email copy of the transcript from the structured computer program; and
- s) having access to the transcript through the structured computer program over the network.

31. A system for conducting computerized negotiations, comprising:

- a) providing access to a structured computer program to a plurality of users via a network;
- b) providing communications between the plurality of users via text, audio, or
5 video communications over the network;
- c) providing private communications between the plurality of users and specified users or specified groups of users over the network;
- d) providing a means for the plurality of users to exchange documents over the network;
- 10 e) providing a means for the plurality of users to edit documents in real time; and
- f) providing a plurality of negotiation services through the structured computer program over the network.

32. A system for conducting computerized negotiations, as recited in claim 31, wherein one of the plurality of negotiation services comprises:

- a) providing access to a database of document templates and forms through the structured computer program over the network.

33. A system for conducting computerized negotiations, as recited in claim 31, wherein one of the plurality of negotiation services comprises:
- a) receiving a user document from a user;
 - b) converting the user document into a user template and saving the user
5 template into a user template database;
 - c) marking the user template as private or public;
 - d) providing secure access to the user templates marked private; and
 - e) providing access to the user templates marked public.
34. A system for conducting computerized negotiations, as recited in claim 31, wherein one of the plurality of negotiation services comprises:
- a) securing documents so that they cannot be changed.
35. A system for conducting computerized negotiations, as recited in claim 31, wherein one of the plurality of negotiation services comprises:
- a) saving documents into a memory means; and
 - b) providing access to the documents in the memory means.
36. A system for conducting computerized negotiations, as recited in claim 31, wherein one of the plurality of negotiation services comprises:
- a) sending a document to the plurality of users over the network.
37. A system for conducting computerized negotiations, as recited in claim 31, wherein one of the plurality of negotiation services comprises:
- a) providing a means for the plurality of users to exchange documents with specified users or specified groups of users over the network.
38. A system for conducting computerized negotiations, as recited in claim 31, wherein one of the plurality of negotiation services comprises:
- a) providing a means for digitally signing documents.
39. A system for conducting computerized negotiations, as recited in claim 31, wherein one of the plurality of negotiation services comprises:
- a) providing access to a plurality of informational databases through the structured computer program over the network.

40. A system for conducting computerized negotiations, as recited in claim 31, wherein one of the plurality of negotiation services comprises:

a) providing the translation of text, communications, and documents between multiple languages.

41. A system for conducting computerized negotiations, as recited in claim 31, wherein one of the plurality of negotiation services comprises:

a) providing a means for determining if the plurality of users are within a settlement parameter.

42. A system for conducting computerized negotiations, as recited in claim 31, wherein one of the plurality of negotiation services comprises:

- a) requesting and receiving a structured settlement quote from a broker; and
- b) sending the structured settlement quote to the plurality of users.

43. A system for conducting computerized negotiations, as recited in claim 31, wherein one of the plurality of negotiation services comprises:

- a) providing access to the structured computer program to a mediator via the network;
- 5 b) providing communications between the mediator and the plurality of users via text, audio, or video communications over the network;
- c) providing private communications between the mediator and specified users over the network; and
- d) providing a means for the mediator and the plurality of users to exchange
10 documents over the network.

44. A system for conducting computerized negotiations, as recited in claim 31, wherein one of the plurality of negotiation services comprises:

- a) providing access to the structured computer program to a court reporter via the network;
- 5 b) providing communications between the court reporter and the plurality of users via text, audio, or video communications over the network;
- c) providing a means for the court reporter and the plurality of users to exchange documents over the network;

- 10 d) displaying a transcript to the plurality of users as it is being entered by the court reporter;
- e) saving the transcript into a memory means;
- f) emailing the transcript to the plurality of users; and
- g) providing access to the transcript to the plurality of users.
45. A system for conducting computerized negotiations, comprising:
- a) providing access to a structured computer program to a plurality of users, a mediator, and a court reporter via the Internet;
- 5 b) providing communications between the plurality of users, the mediator, and the court reporter via text, audio, or video communications over the Internet;
- c) providing private communications between the plurality of users, the mediator, and specified users or specified groups of users over the Internet;
- d) providing a means for the plurality of users, the mediator, and the court reporter to exchange documents over the Internet;
- 10 e) providing a means for the plurality of users to simultaneously edit documents in real time;
- f) providing access to a database of document templates and forms through the structured computer program over the Internet;
- g) receiving a user document from a user, converting the user document into a user template, saving the user template into a user template database, marking the user template as private or public, providing secure access to the user templates marked private; and providing access to the user templates marked public;
- 15 h) securing documents so that they cannot be changed;
- i) saving documents into a memory means and providing access to the documents in the memory means;
- 20 j) sending a document to the plurality of users over the Internet;
- k) providing a means for the plurality of users to exchange documents with specified users or specified groups of users over the Internet;
- l) providing a means for digitally signing documents;
- 25 m) providing access to a plurality of informational databases;
- n) providing the translation of text, communications, and documents between multiple languages;

- o) providing a means for determining if the plurality of users are within a settlement parameter;
- 30 p) requesting and receiving a structured settlement quote from a broker and sending the structured settlement quote to the plurality of users; and
- q) displaying a transcript to the plurality of users as it is being entered by the court reporter, saving the transcript into a memory means, emailing the transcript to the plurality of users, and providing access to the transcript to the plurality of users.

46. A system for conducting computerized negotiations, as recited in claims 1, 16 and 31, wherein:

- a) the network is the Internet.

47. A system for conducting computerized negotiations, as recited in claims 1, 16 and 31, wherein:

- a) the network is a local area network.

48. A system for conducting computerized negotiations, as recited in claims 1, 16 and 31, wherein:

- a) the network is a wide area network.

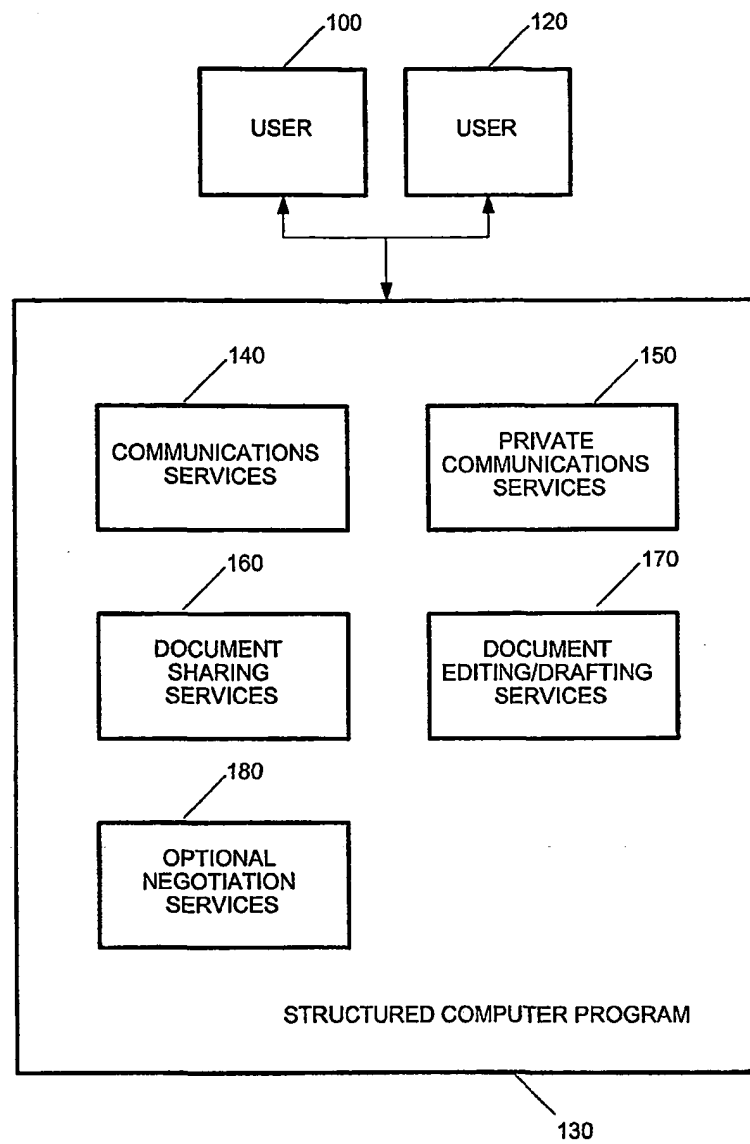


FIGURE 1

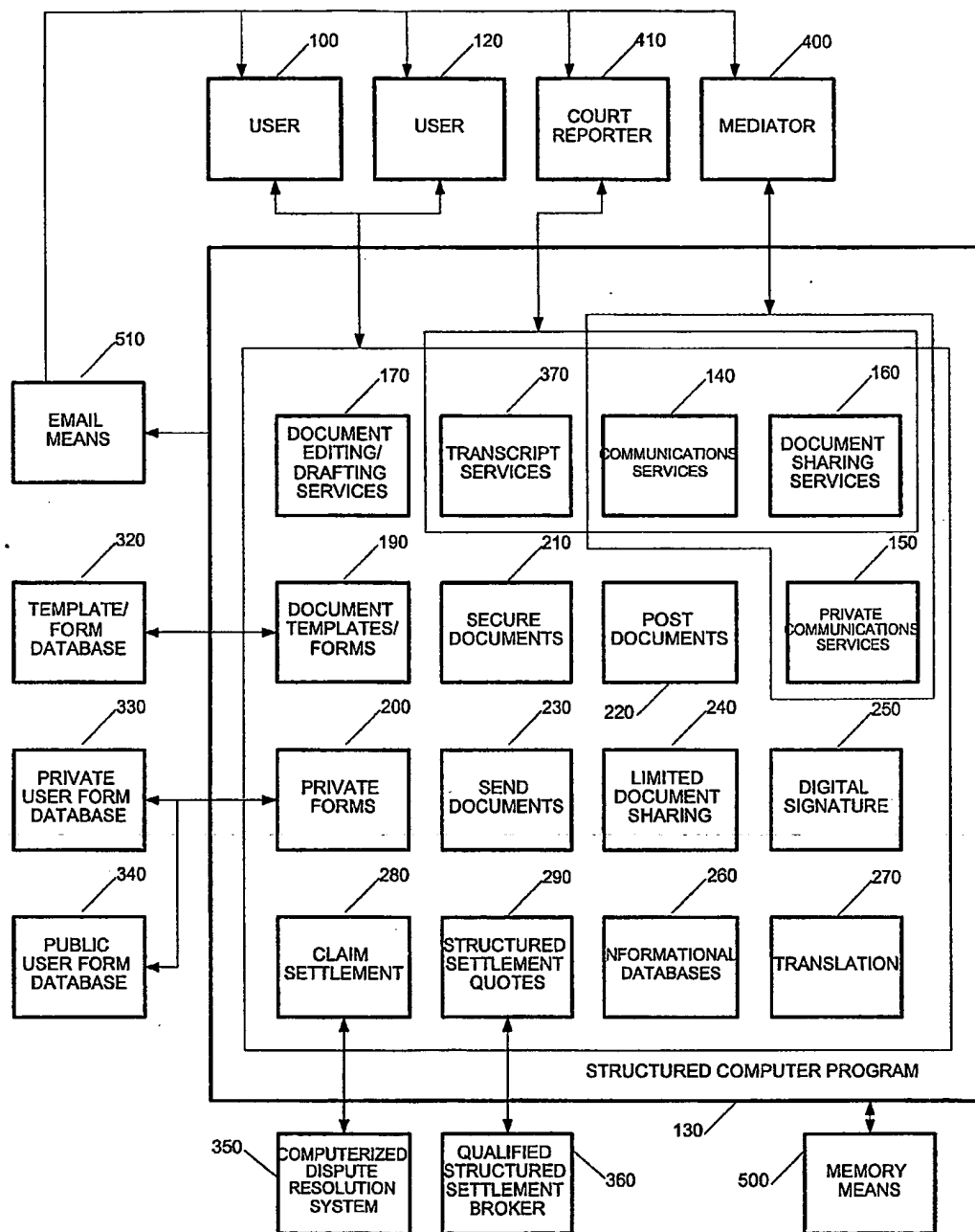


FIGURE 2

FURTHER INFORMATION CONTINUED FROM PCT/ISA/ 203

The claims relate to subject matter for which no search is required according to Rule 39 PCT. Given that the claims are formulated in terms of such subject matter or merely specify commonplace features relating to its technological implementation, the search examiner could not establish any technical problem which might potentially have required an inventive step to overcome. Hence it was not possible to carry out a meaningful search into the state of the art (Art. 17(2)(a)(i) and (ii) PCT; see Guidelines Part B Chapter VIII, 1-6).

The applicant's attention is drawn to the fact that claims relating to inventions in respect of which no international search report has been established need not be the subject of an international preliminary examination (Rule 66.1(e) PCT). The applicant is advised that the EPO policy when acting as an International Preliminary Examining Authority is normally not to carry out a preliminary examination on matter which has not been searched. This is the case irrespective of whether or not the claims are amended following receipt of the search report or during any Chapter II procedure. If the application proceeds into the regional phase before the EPO, the applicant is reminded that a search may be carried out during examination before the EPO (see EPO Guideline C-VI, 8.5), should the problems which led to the Article 17(2) declaration be overcome.